

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/CEN:MJPLATT

APPROVED BY ARA:FDEVINE

P:DTICE

EUR/UK:JSHUMATE

S/S-0:AWOTTO

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O 032219Z JUN 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BELIZE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T STATE 128822

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, GT, BH, UK, MX

SUBJECT: BELIZE DISPUTE:, CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH

SUMMARY: THE BRITISH SAY THEY HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE FOR BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THEY FEEL THAT NEGOTIATIONS NO LONGER HAVE ANY HOPE OF SUCCESS. THEY WANT OUR ACTIVE AND PUBLICLY DECLARED SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

1. UK DEPUTY MINISTER TED ROWLANDS DISCUSSED BELIZE MAY 31 - JUNE 1 WITH UNDERSECRETARY HABIB AND ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS.

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2. ROWLANDS BEGAN THE MEETING BY SAYING THAT A CABINET COMMITTEE HAD MET LAST WEEK AND HAD MADE THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS: (A) THE BRITISH HAVE GIVEN UP HOPE OF NEGOTIATING A SETTLEMENT WITH GUATEMALA. THEY HAVE TRIED EVERY POSSIBLE COMBINATION OF OFFERS BUT WITH NO SUCCESS. THE GUATEMALANS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATING

SERIOUSLY. (B) THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED THAT IT CANNOT WAIT ANY LONGER. THEY HAVE EXPLICITLY REJECTED THE STATUS QUO AND HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE FOR BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. THE BRITISH REALIZE THAT PUBLICLY BEGINNING THE INDEPENDENCE PROCESS CARRIES WITH IT A HIGH RISK THAT THE GUATEMALANS WILL RESPOND WITH A MILITARY MOVE. THE BRITISH ARE PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISK. BUT THEY WANT OTHER COUNTRIES TO SUPPORT THEM. THEY WANT TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" THEIR ACTION. THAT IS, THEY WOULD LIKE TO ENLIST SEVERAL OTHER NATIONS TO PUBLICLY SUPPORT THEIR DECISION. THIS INCLUDES TRYING TO GET OTHER NATIONS TO JOIN IN WITH MILITARY SUPPORT ON THE GROUND IN BELIZE. "INTERNATIONALIZING" THE ISSUE WILL PREVENT THE GUATEMALANS FROM SAYING IT IS STILL A BILATERAL DISPUTE.

4. THE BRITISH WANT TO ORGANIZE THIS "INTERNATIONAL" SUPPORT TO PROVIDE A TWO TO THREE YEAR GUARANTEE OF BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE.

5. OF VITAL NECESSITY TO THIS PLAN IS ACTIVE AND PUBLIC U.S. SUPPORT. THEY DO NOT WANT OUR TROOPS BUT RATHER A PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT WE ARE WILLING TO SUPPORT BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE.

6. MR. HABIB ASKED WHAT THE BRITISH INTENDED TO TELL THE GUATEMALANS IN THEIR NEXT NEGOTIATING ROUND. HE ASKED IF THE BRITISH WERE PREPARED TO OFFER SOME TERRITORY
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TORY TO GUATEMALA AS THEY HAD MENTIONED BEFORE. ROWLANDS REPLIED THAT THE GUATEMALANS SIMPLY WANTED TOO MUCH. HE WOULD TRY TO KEEP THE NEGOTIATIONS GOING, BUT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET THE GUATEMALAN DEMANDS.

7. HABIB ASKED IF THE BRITISH WERE PREPARED TO OFFER THE MOHO RIVER LINE. ROWLANDS SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TRIED TO DO SO IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS. IF THIS WERE THE FINAL STEP NEEDED TO SEAL A BARGAIN, THEN THE BRITISH WOULD HAVE TRIED TO FORCE PRICE TO ACCEPT CESSION OF TERRITORY UP TO THE MOHO RIVER. BUT THIS WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH FOR THE GUATEMALANS AND THEREFORE THERE WAS LITTLE POINT IN FORCING PRICE TO GO ALONG.

8. HABIB ASKED IF THE BRITISH HAD CONSIDERED THAT THEY WOULD BE STARTING THE INDEPENDENCE PROCESS RIGHT BEFORE THE GUATEMALAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. ROWLANDS REPLIED THAT THE BRITISH WERE NOT WILLING TO WAIT ANOTHER EIGHTEEN MONTHS FOR A NEW GUATEMALAN ADMINISTRATION TO

TAKE OFFICE. ALL THE EVIDENCE POINTED TO THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION BEING EVEN MORE HAWKISH ON BELIZE THAN THE PRESENT ONE.

9. AFTER MENTION OF VARIOUS POSSIBLE OPTIONS OPEN TO US, HABIB SAID THE MATTER WOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE SECRETARY AND WE WOULD INFORM THE BRITISH OF OUR POSITION.

10. FULL MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BEING POUCHEO. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT, LOBBYING, INDEPENDENCE, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE128822
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MJPLATT
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770199-0129
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770691/aaaadcbp.tel
Line Count: 126
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c6a54685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2281867
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELIZE DISPUTE; CONVERSATION WITH THE BRITISH SUMMARY: THE BRITISH SAY THEY HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE FOR BELIZIAN INDEPENDENCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE Y F
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, GT, BH, MX, UK, US, (HABIB, PHILIP C), (LUERS, WILLIAM H), (ROWLANDS, TED)
To: GUATEMALA BELIZE MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c6a54685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

